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## *House of Representatives*

# HOLDING ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY ACCOUNTABLE!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Speaker, the systemic and longstanding problems at Arlington National Cemetery have become well-known and are a national tragedy. Arlington National Cemetery is our most hallowed ground, the final resting place of many of our heroes. Every year, nearly 4 million people visit this cemetery. Because of the importance of Arlington to our national memory, the American people expect Arlington to be run reverently and meticulously, but as we all know now, this has not been the case.

Following a yearlong series of investigative reports published on Salon.com, the Army prompted an investigation regarding reports of unmarked, misidentified, or misplaced graves. The Army investigation identified a culture of inaction and inactivity, a failure to act and a failure to come to grips with the problems at Arlington. Unfortunately, these problems have been going on for years.

Recently, the Army opened a criminal investigation after eight urns of cremated remains were found in a grave marked "unknown." Army Secretary John McHugh has taken many steps to correct the many failures at Arlington, and we applaud his efforts. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs has worked closely with our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee to get answers and find a way forward.

I agree with our esteemed chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Ike Skelton, who stated in a June hearing that, "We must be prepared that a 100 percent survey of the cemetery and all of its operations, which I believe must now be undertaken, will yield a larger number of problems that must be addressed."

A comprehensive survey may find that the burial errors at Arlington may number in the thousands, but in order to provide a concrete solution to this

problem, we must first fully understand the scope.

The Senate has acted, passing S. 3860 on December 4 of this year. This measure requires reports to Congress on the management of Arlington National Cemetery, including grave site discrepancies, the management and oversight of contracts, and the implementation of recent Army directives. Passing S. 3860 is a first step but not the final answer.

In the waning days of this Congress, we have the opportunity to send to the President this important measure. We will continue to work closely with our colleagues in Armed Services, with the administration, and with our Senate colleagues in the months ahead to fix what is wrong at Arlington and to ensure that the operation of this national shrine honors the men and women who lie at rest there.